Program instills lifelong habits

Chefs for Kids teaches first- and second-grade children about eating a healthful diet and maintaining a physically active lifestyle. Nutrition educators from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension work with students in high-needs schools in the Clark and Washoe County school districts.

Childhood and adolescence are the critical periods for development of good health practices. Many health behaviors established in childhood persist into adulthood. Because many chronic diseases are attributable to poor diet, physical inactivity and weight, it is essential to start good health practices as early as possible. Proper nutrition is essential to a child's physical, mental and cognitive development.

Evaluations show that students are learning and making positive changes in behavior. Children are able to categorize foods according to food group and know which foods within each food group are healthier choices.

Snack choices improved from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year. Students were asked to choose three snacks out of 10 possibilities both at the start of the year and at the end of the year. Healthy snack choices increased and the less healthful snack choices decreased by the end of the school year.

Children also learned what it means to have an active lifestyle, and more than 92 percent could name two activities that would be part of an active lifestyle.

Finally, children learned to wash hands properly. Two weeks after the lessons on hand washing and food safety, more than 83 percent of children were able to wash their hands using all the steps they were taught in class.

The increase in childhood obesity is attributed to sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets. Exercise has given way to TV, the Internet and video games, and the reduction of school physical education programs.

"At a parent night activity at one of our schools this year, the mother of one of the Chefs for Kids students approached the nutrition educator. The mother was quite delighted in her son’s newfound interest in food—especially healthy food.

"He helps me with the shopping and is always saying, ‘Mommy, don’t buy that food. It has too much fat,’ or ‘Can’t we get some apples today?’ My whole family is making better choices because my son is so excited about food and making good choices!"

"With childhood obesity soaring and the number of people qualifying for food assistance skyrocketing, UNCE's partnership with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services has never been more important."
SNAP-Ed is making a difference here

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) is a federal/state partnership that supports nutrition education for persons eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Two key federal partners are the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). FNS determines national policies and procedures, monitors state programs, and reimburses states for up to half of program costs. NIFA facilitates communication among federal, state and local partners, and provides programmatic leadership to university contractors for effective nutrition education through the land-grant system.

State and local funding comes primarily from land-grant institutions which contract with SNAP agencies to deliver SNAP-Ed. They reach intended audiences by coordinating with state and local partners and with other contractors. Other contractors are state public health departments, food banks, tribal programs and local health organizations.

The goal of SNAP-Ed through the land-grant system is to provide educational programs and conduct social marketing campaigns that increase the likelihood that people eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Food Guidance System (MyPyramid.gov).

Students, families learn nutrition

SNAP-Ed programs reached thousands of Nevadans with valuable information on fitness and healthy food

With childhood obesity reaching epidemic proportions in the United States and the number of people qualifying for supplemental food assistance skyrocketing, the importance of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s partnership with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services has never been greater.

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, helps put food on the table for more than 40 million Americans. In the past year, the number of people qualifying for SNAP in Nevada has risen nearly 30 percent.

Cooperative Extension works with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services to ensure those recipients learn how to use their benefits to purchase foods that pack the most nutritious punch. Last year UNCE received nearly $1 million of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program educational (SNAP-Ed) funds through Health and Human Services. Cooperative Extension matched that grant amount by investing staff, research and materials into programs to deliver knowledge and information to SNAP recipients.

Nationally and in Nevada, SNAP-Ed programs have proven to be worth the investment. Nationally, studies show these programs help improve student grades and keep families off welfare. Cooperative Extension works with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services to ensure those recipients learn how to use their benefits to purchase foods that pack the most nutritious punch. Last year UNCE received nearly $1 million of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program educational (SNAP-Ed) funds through Health and Human Services.

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Analysis shows that Team Nutrition is effectively increasing teachers’ basic nutrition knowledge and increasing the number of nutrition lessons they are undertaking with their students independently.

Veggies for Kids: Grow Strong

Veggies for Kids targets Nevada second- and third-graders in schools with high percentages of American Indian students. It is currently being conducted in Wadsworth (Wasco County), Owyhee (Elko County) and Hawthorne (Mineral County). Of all ethnic groups, Native American children are at greatest risk for obesity, attendant development of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Native Americans are eating a waning amount of vegetables, fruit, fish and lean wild game. Through 10 in-class, education standards-based lessons, this program promotes awareness of the health benefits of traditional foods, promotion of their consumption, and subsistence or supplementary vegetable gardening as a means to promote the desired intake of vegetables and fruits recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA’s My Pyramid food guide.

VFK program has demonstrated success in the following areas:

- Recognition of the MyPyramid for Kids food groups
- Ability to correctly identify several common vegetables
- Willingness to taste previously untried vegetables
- Reported preferences for selected vegetables
- Reported physical activity
- Exposure to traditional food sources and gathering techniques

Continued on page 3

SNAP-Ed follows a set of principles, including:

- SNAP-Ed is designed to facilitate the voluntary adoption of eating and other nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well being for those on a limited budget.
- SNAP-Ed has the greatest impact when it targets women and children in SNAP eligible households.
- SNAP-Ed uses science-based, behaviorally focused interventions and can maximize its national impact by concentrating on key outcomes.

The history behind the program

SNAP-Ed began in 1988 when Cooperative Extension faculty in Brown County, Wisc., and University of Wisconsin Extension staff discovered that by committing state and local funding and contracting with the state SNAP agency, an equal amount of federal dollars could be secured to expand the reach of nutrition education to low-income persons in that area. Other universities soon followed. In 1992, seven states conducted SNAP-Ed using $661,000 in federal funds. By 2004, SNAP-Ed was conducted throughout the country using nearly $460 million, with $228.6 million in SNAP administration funds and the remainder contributed by matched dollars.

By 2004, land-grant colleges and universities were conducting SNAP-Ed in all 50 states.
Programs fight childhood obesity

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Nutrition Specialist Kerry Seymour oversees programs that tackle the public health epidemic of childhood obesity. Thirty-eight percent of the children in Washoe County are overweight and 34 percent are obese – both above the national average. Her programs target schools where more than 50 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced price meals.

Grow Yourself Healthy

This innovative program uses school gardens as a way of promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity to prevent obesity and chronic disease. The program reaches third- through fifth-grade students with 22 lessons, and in 2010, 103 nutrition lessons were taught to 178 students. Additional nutrition education was delivered at the participating charter school during six summer lessons with youth and parent participation, three separate parent meetings and two teacher in-service meetings. All told, 2,676 people learned about Grow Yourself Healthy.

Program developer Kerry Seymour, a nutrition specialist with Cooperative Extension, reached hundreds more students and parents through a spring plant sale and fall farmers market that included seedlings and produce grown by students.

By partnering with the Washoe County School District’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Seymour and her team were able to provide fresh produce sampling to the entire school while delivering nutrition education messages.

The key message: Eat a Rainbow. Consume a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Team Nutrition – Smart Choices

This 10-year-old program teaches basic skills related to food selection by promoting a variety of nutritious goods, including fruits and vegetables. It reaches students, but also helps teachers feel more confident about delivering health and nutrition education. The annually updated curriculum includes in-service teacher training, grade-specific, in-class nutrition instruction (including fruit and vegetable sampling), and distribution of three nutrition newsletters to teachers and parents.

Impact:
- Taught in five schools
- Reached 129 teachers and staff
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UNCE matches federal grants to provide sound programs

Continued from page 2

valuable information on fitness and eating healthy food. Programs helped people of all ages, from newborn infants to senior citizens, and reached people in many varied locations, from new mothers still in the maternity ward to preschoolers on the playground – all over the state of Nevada.

“Our partnership with the state Department of Health and Human Services is crucial to our efforts to reach Nevadans with these messages,” said UNCE Dean and Director Karen Hinton. “We are able to leverage these federal dollars provided to the state into creating programs that are based on sound science and are extremely effective.”

UNCE’s hard work is paying dividends. In one evaluation after another, parents and children say these programs are changing the way they live their lives.

“I took my children to McDonald’s and my son said that they didn’t have any ‘Go snacks’ there,” recalled one mother, whose son has gone through a UNCE program called “All 4 Kids: Healthy, Happy, Active, Fit” in Clark County. “He made me go to the store and buy him an apple. Then when my daughter picked out candy for a snack at the store, my son told her that it was a ‘Whoa snack.’ He led us to the fruit and vegetable section where he told me which fruits and vegetables he liked and might like next time.”

Wilson said a key to UNCE’s nutrition education efforts is the coordination provided by Darlene Daugherty of the state Department of Health and Human Services, which is part of the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services.

“Daugherty helped form the Nevada Nutrition Assistance Consortium six years ago. The consortium brings together Nevada’s FNS partners and organizations that provide nutrition education to low-income audiences and makes sure programs are complementary. The goal is to eliminate overlap and extend messages even farther than individual programs can reach by themselves,” Wilson said.
UNCE programs pack a nutritious punch

In 2009, more than 10,000 Nevadans benefitted from Cooperative Extension’s SNAP-Ed programs. There were 12 UNCE health and nutrition programs in 2010, and three more programs were added in 2011. These programs reach a variety of audiences, from pregnant and breastfeeding women to school-age children and families with young children. Here is a brief overview of all the programs:

All 4 Kids
Focused on low-income preschoolers in Clark County and promotes healthy eating and physical activity. The pilot program conducted in 2009 reached nearly 300 children, and evaluations showed that 80 percent consumed healthy snacks such as fruit and vegetables more often after taking the class. Their motor skills also improved as a result of the dances they learned.

Chefs for Kids
Targets high-risk schools to promote lifelong, healthy lifestyles that researchers say will lower their risk for heart disease and other chronic illnesses. Second-graders at 12 high-need schools learn about healthy food combinations, and a video series is presented for first-graders at 24 high-needs sites.

Eat Smart, Live Strong
Improves fruit and vegetable consumption and use of commodity foods among seniors, many of whom are low-income, hungry or need nutrition-related assistance. The program includes classes on growing herbs and small vegetables in window pots, food safety tips and healthy recipes using commodity foods.

Food for Health and Soul/Cocinando Delicioso Y Saludable
Teaches families how to modify recipes by decreasing sugar, fat and salt and increasing fiber, decreasing family members’ risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Surveys show that the hundreds of people in Clark County who complete the classes continue to make healthy food choices.

Mom’s Special Gift
Encourages breastfeeding to hundreds of new, low-income, predominantly minority mothers every year. The goal of Mom’s Special Gift is consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommendation that mothers exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first six months of life and to continue breastfeeding for a minimum of one year.

Chefs for Kids

Why is SNAP-Ed needed?
Federal studies have shown that many low-income adults do not know what types of dietary practices are healthful or what specific foods maintain a healthy diet. This lack of knowledge has coupled with an increasingly sedentary lifestyle across all income levels to result in a rising epidemic of overweight and obesity in America. Nearly 70 percent of adults and 16 percent of children and adolescents in the United States are overweight — putting them at risk for heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and some cancers. According to the federal government, low-income households have a higher prevalence of health conditions related to poor nutrition than households with higher incomes. Women with lower family income levels are 50 percent more likely to be obese than those with higher family incomes. Children of overweight mothers are more likely to be overweight themselves by age 6 than children of lean mothers. While obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades, they have increased the most among those in the lowest income levels, especially African-American and Mexican-American children.

If current trends continue through 2020, treating the consequences of obesity may consume up to one-fifth of health care expenditures – a trend with serious implications for the fiscal welfare of the state, which must bear a substantial share of these costs.

Nutrition assistance programs, which reach one in four Americans in the course of a year at a cost of over $50 billion, are the largest single funder of nutrition education in the nation. In 2006, more than $650 million was provided through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for nutrition education, counseling and prevention services, mostly in the form of grants to state agencies.

Programs teach health, diet

Niks & Knacks
Teaches health, good nutrition and the importance of picking the right afterschool snacks.

Nutrition in the Garden
Third-, fourth- and fifth-graders at certain Washoe County schools with a high percentage of Hispanic students grow and eat their own food, and parents serve as garden volunteers.

Team Nutrition Smart Choices
Increases both teachers’ and students’ awareness of healthy diet, with emphasis on eating more vegetables and fruits. In-service presentations reached 128 teachers, and 73 classes reached 1,956 students last year – a 225 percent increase over the previous year.

Veggies for Kids
Helps American Indian students in the second and third grades choose more vegetables, incorporating traditional Native American cuisine. It also provides an introduction to plant growing and engages parents through take-home assignments.

Small Steps 4 Big Changes
Addresses the problem of childhood obesity by focusing on healthy eating from each food group, incorporating easy-to-fix snacks and physical activity.

Anahua
Helps primarily Hispanic eighth-graders understand the importance of school, good health and a nutritious diet. The program spotlights domesticated fruits and vegetables from Mexico and reinforces the cultural importance and health benefits of those fruits and vegetables.

Healthy Steps to Freedom
Helps women and girls in substance-abuse and mental-health settings learn nutrition, exercise and body acceptance. People in recovery with poor dietary practices and sedentary lifestyles often gain weight during recovery, prompting many relapses.

An Ounce of Prevention
Targets low-income Hispanic families with a high risk for diabetes. More than 1,200 Las Vegas residents have completed the program. The program has brought about a significant improvement in knowledge of diabetes, as well as knowledge of the risk factors for diabetes. Self-reported lifestyle behaviors have also changed significantly. Physical activity increased and TV watching decreased.

Youth for Health
Y4H is a Lyon County after-school program that teaches youth about food in a cultural context, such as where food comes from. It promotes healthy choices by providing a well-rounded approach, using the USDA curriculum, Eat Smart Play Hard and Agriculture in the Classroom. During each after-school session, youth are introduced to a new physical activity and snack demonstration with a recipe and activity description to take home.
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Calcium, It’s Not Just Milk
Targets low-income, middle-school-aged students and encourages consumption of low-fat, calcium-rich foods. Through classroom lessons and in-school activities, the number of students who could identify calcium-rich food increased from 8 percent to 70 percent. The program last year reached nearly 2,000 students in Clark County alone.

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After taking the All 4 Kids class, the consumption of healthy snacks, fruits and vegetables increased and children’s motor skills improved. This UNCE curriculum is now reaching a national audience.

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The Nevada Nutrition Consortium brings together all groups to help educators collaborate and make sure nutrition programs don’t overlap.
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Nationally and in Nevada, SNAP-Ed programs have proven to be worth the investment. Nationally, studies show these programs help improve student grades and keep families off welfare. In Nevada, SNAP-Ed funds help support 15 UNCE educational programs designed to teach good nutrition and the importance of exercise to Nevada families.

“For years we’ve heard calls for people on nutritional assistance programs to make better food choices,” said UNCE Nutrition Specialist Mary Wilson. “That’s what we do. We provide educational programs to help families make healthier decisions.”

UNCE’s SNAP-Ed programs in collaboration with the state Department of Health and Human Services reached thousands of Nevadans last year with SNAP-Ed programs have proven to be worth the investment. Studies show these programs help improve student grades and keep families off welfare.

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- Willingness to taste previously untried vegetables
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- Exposure to traditional food sources and gathering techniques (as a means to build cultural pride while promoting less processed foods).

The history behind the program

SNAP-Ed began in 1988 when Cooperative Extension faculty in Brown County, Wisc., and University of Wisconsin Extension staff discovered that by committing state and local funding and contracting with the state SNAP agency, an equal amount of federal dollars could be secured to expand the reach of nutrition education to low-income persons in that area.

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